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# GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS

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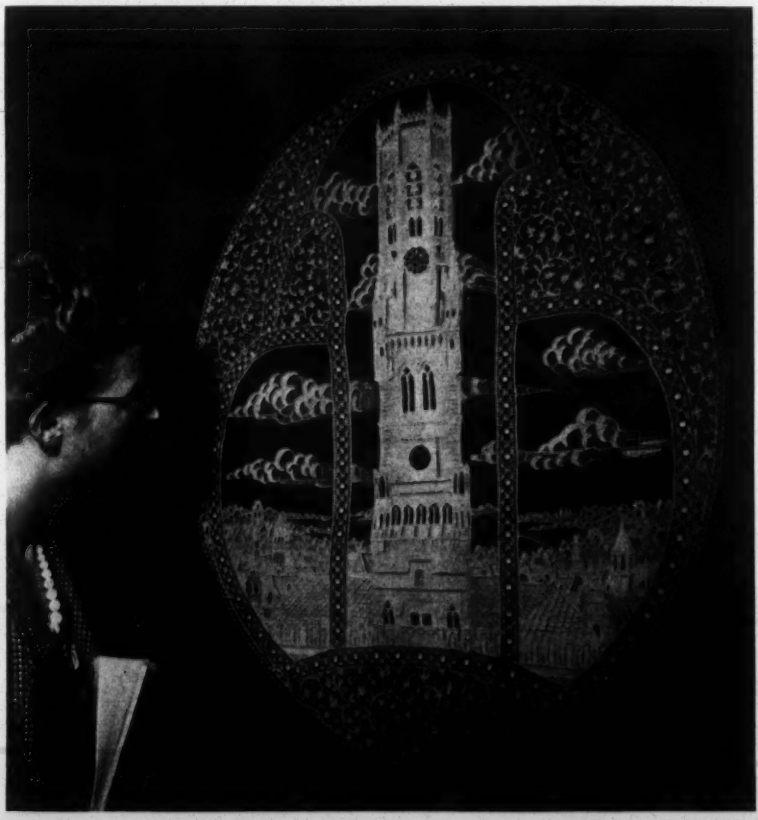

MAYNARD OWEN WILLIAMS

**BRUGES, OLD TEXTILE CENTER, POSED FOR THIS WORK OF ART IN LACE, ONE OF THE TRADE-MARK INDUSTRIES OF BELGIUM (Bulletin No. 1)**

Bulletin No. 1, March 13, 1950

# Belgium Votes on King Leopold Issue

THE referendum held Sunday in Belgium on the "royal question"—whether the people want Leopold III back as their king—affected a European country small in size but important by other yardsticks.

Belgium is Europe's most densely populated land. Its carefully tilled soil produces the highest yield per acre. It occupies an important segment of northwest Europe's most highly developed manufacturing, mining, and trading area. In the Belgian Congo, it controls one of the largest single colonies in the world.

## Two Peoples—Five Geographic Areas

The location of Belgium has made it a path of peace and war. Four great commercial nations surround it—Germany, the Netherlands, France, and (across the narrow North Sea) England. Their trade, plus Belgium's own, crisscrosses the little country on 1,000 miles of waterways, 6,500 miles of roads, and 7,000 miles of railways. Their armies have met on Flanders battlefields since long before there was a Belgium.

American doughboys in World War I and G.I.'s in World War II became well acquainted with the "cockpit of Europe," as strategic Belgium is called. They saw a land of two distinct peoples—Flemish and Walloon—and five different geographic divisions.

Belgium's 40 miles of North Sea coast is a straight beach broken by an occasional port. The country reaches inland approximately four times the length of its coast. Because its north and south boundaries diverge, its inland north and south extent is also about 150 miles.

Inland from the beach and dunes lies a low, watery alluvial zone from four to 12 miles wide—the area of the polders. This is followed by a belt of sandy soil 15 to 40 miles wide. Next comes a rich farming belt of loam seven to 35 miles in width. Beyond lies the industrial region. Farthest inland, in the southeast corner, is the Ardennes.

## Plain of Flanders Is Sandy Heath

Belgium's polder country near the coast was once a region of lagoons. It has been reclaimed for agriculture by pumping and draining. The tracts of sandy, clayey soil—at or below sea level—are protected by dikes and laced by canals. Raised causeways cross the fields. The landscape is treeless except for rows of poplars along the dikes.

The second strip, of sandy soil, stretches almost across the country. Its highest points are not more than 250 feet above sea level. Much of the land is barren heath; reclamation has been a continuous project. The western part of this strip is the plain of Flanders. To the north is Antwerpen, the country's premier port (population 273,300), more than 50 miles inland on the Schelde River. Other large cities are Ghent (Gent) (illustration, inside cover), Ypres (Ieper), Mechelen (Malines, Mechlin), and Bruges (Brugge), the lace center (illustration, cover).

In the agricultural belt next inland, the farms are larger. Brussels

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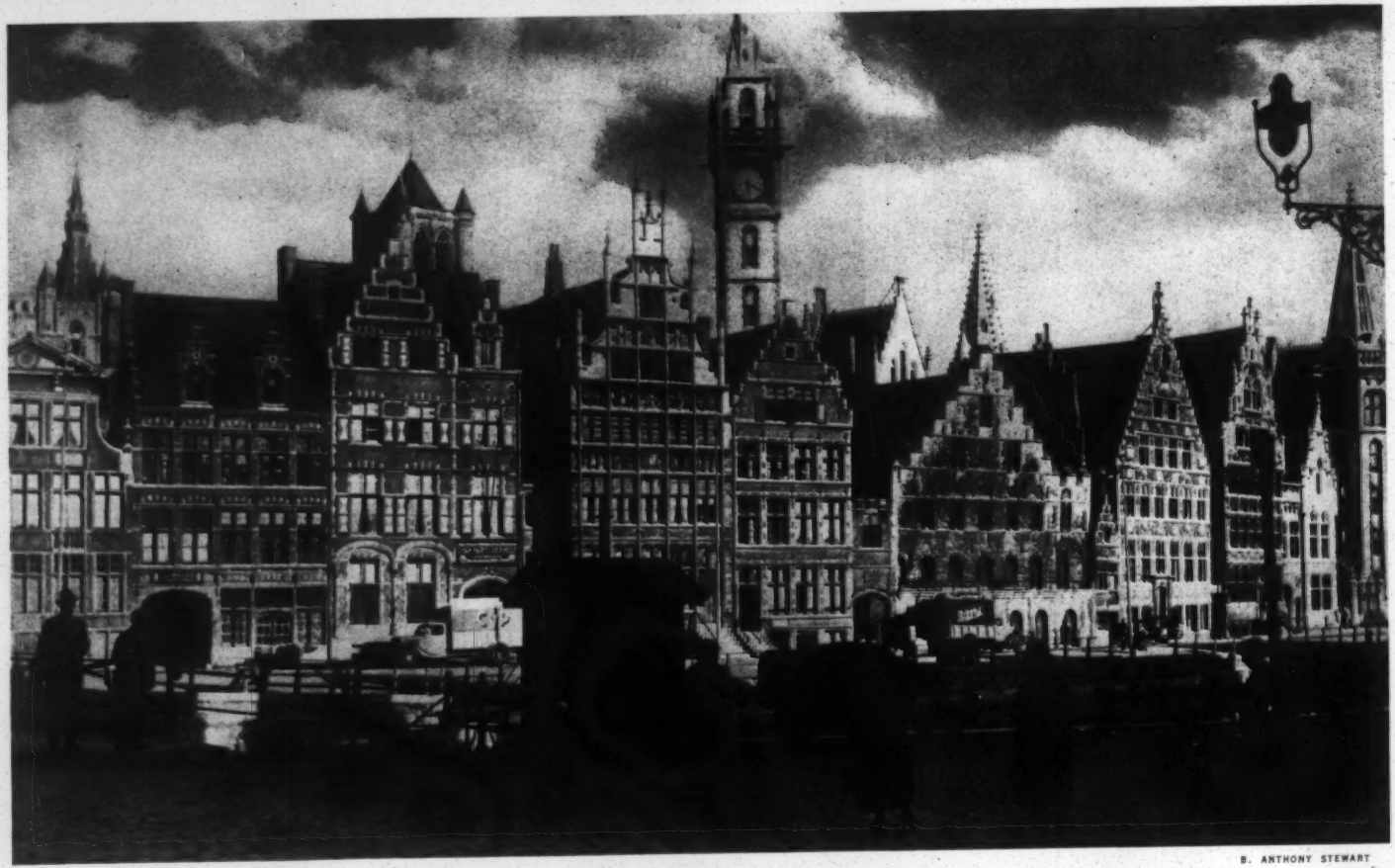

B. ANTHONY STEWART

**GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE AND MOTOR TRUCKS BLEND OLD AND NEW ALONG GHENT'S COBBLED STREETS**

The rivers Lys and Schelde cut Ghent into many islands as they meander through the busy industrial city of Belgium (Bulletin No. 1). This stretch along the Lys (Leie) includes guild houses of the pilots, corn sellers, and masons. Behind their stepped gables rises the Belfry. Built from the 12th to the 14th century, it towers 385 feet from the ground to the dragon-tip of its spire. To Americans, Ghent is of special interest as the signing place of the treaty which ended the War of 1812.

Bulletin No. 2, March 13, 1950

# Cumberland Gap to Honor Pioneers of 1750

THE tramp of pioneers will echo once more—this time in the nation's imagination—when Kentucky holds its state-wide celebration, next month, of the 200th anniversary of the opening of historic Cumberland Gap.

This mountain pass cuts through rugged hills, crowned with mountain laurel and rhododendron, at the point where modern boundaries of Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee meet. For decades before and after Daniel Boone cut his famous trail through Cumberland Gap, it offered early westbound travelers the easiest southern route across the great mountain wall of the Appalachians.

## Walker and Boone Preceded by Unknown

The first American colonist to file written claim to discovery of the gap was Dr. Thomas Walker, a Virginia physician and trained woodsman who, in the spring of 1750, 25 years before Boone, led a pioneer land venture into the Appalachian wilderness.

It is Walker's feat that Kentucky is commemorating. But long before Walker's time, an adventurous and unlettered youth named Gabriel Arthur had reached this same spot by another route.

Arthur, formerly an indentured servant, was a member of an expedition sent out in 1673 to find a path across the mountains of southwest Virginia into the unexplored land beyond. After various adventures with friendly and hostile Indians, the expedition's leader was killed, and Arthur lived for a time with the friendly Cherokee tribe of Tomahitan.

Forced to accompany the Tomahitan braves on the warpath, he was captured by the Shawnees in Ohio. It was after the young man's release, and on his southward trip down the Indians' old "Warrior Path" across Kentucky, west of the Appalachians, that he came to the Cumberland Gap.

## 20,000 Pioneers in One Season

Unable to write the story himself, Arthur entrusted the account of his exploits to others. But the point of the tale was missed, since the gap's significance as a gateway for westward expansion was still unrecognized. Not until the Walker trip 76 years later did the pass come into prominence. And even then years of Indian warfare continued to hold back extensive movement into Kentucky and settlement around the gap.

In 1775, the blazing of the Wilderness Road by Daniel Boone and his axmen finally opened the way to mass migration. In one season, some 20,000 pioneers were counted pushing through Cumberland Gap, afoot, on horseback, or behind ox teams.

Boone's trail was eventually eclipsed by less mountainous routes to the West. But this strategic pass was still to play a dramatic military role and to witness a fantastic boom.

During the Civil War it was a hotly contested prize between Confederate and Union troops. In the late 1880's, the surrounding region was the scene of a spectacular British-financed attempt to establish an industrial empire based on local coal, iron, and timber, and on factory and railway

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(Bruxelles), capital and largest city of Belgium, with a population close to a million, lies in this region. A canal makes it a seaport.

Coal accounts for the industry of the belt adjoining on the south, 10 to 18 miles wide. Factories dot the area. Miners and workers swell the population of such towns as Mons, Charleroi, Namur, and Liége.

South of the industrial zone the land shapes into the deep stream-gashed valleys of the Ardennes triangle, about 70 miles from base to tip. Though clayey, the soil yields good crops. There are quarries of slate, marble, limestone, and sandstone, and iron and manganese mines.

The highest portion, between France and Luxembourg, is a scenic land reaching 2,000 feet above sea level. Waterlogged marshes lie in clay basins. Here the population density is only 137 per square mile, compared with 700 for the country as a whole. The last census counted 8,257,000 Belgians.

NOTE: Belgium is shown on the National Geographic Society's map of Germany and Its Approaches. Write the Society's headquarters, Washington 6, D. C., for map list.

See also "Belgium Comes Back," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for May, 1948; "Low Countries Await Liberation," August, 1944*; and "Belgium—Europe in Miniature," April, 1938. *(Issues marked with an asterisk are included in a special list of Magazines available to teachers in packets of ten for $1.00.)*

DU VINAGE FROM BLACK STAR

**CLIMATE, SOIL, AND WATER MAKE FLAX CURED ON THE BANKS OF THE LYS (LEIE) RIVER THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE. AFTER SOAKING, THE STRAW IS STACKED IN CONES TO DRY**

Bulletin No. 3, March 13, 1950

# Oberammergau Prepares 1950 Passion Play

THE Passion play, proclaiming its theme of sacrifice and love, is having a spirited rebirth in a world tormented by the H-bomb threat, cold wars, and unrelenting international tension.

Not since the 15th century—when the re-enactment of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ reached its highest development—has this dramatic spectacle had as many producers and spectators as seem assured this year.

## Village of Wood Carvers

Outstanding productions this spring and summer will be at Oberammergau, Germany (illustration, next page); Tegelen, the Netherlands; Spearfish, South Dakota; and Lawton, Oklahoma. More than a million and a half people are expected to attend these presentations. Other thousands will see the Yaqui Indian Passion Play at Tucson, Arizona, performed during Holy Week each year, and smaller pageants throughout Christendom.

Oberammergau is a village of simple wood carvers and herdsmen high in the Bavarian Alps next to the Austrian border. It has produced its Passion play, with few lapses, every decennial year since the 1630's. At that time the village was delivered of a plague that raged in the area. The people promised to present the play in gratitude.

The Oberammergau spectacle is not a survival of the miracle plays of the Middle Ages, though it is related to them. The spectacular religious plays of the 1400's sometimes contained as many as 62,000 verses and took as long as 30 days to perform. The people of Europe's largest cities flocked to them en masse.

The magnificent performances of the medieval religious play reflected a combination of fervor, cultural advance, and new-born civic pride in an era of growing towns whose increasing wealth financed the lavish presentations. Everyone possible participated and class distinctions were forgotten when the time came to choose actors for the leading parts.

## Plays Menaced in 18th Century

The role of Christ was then, as now, the greatest honor, but it also was the most exacting in its demands on memory and endurance. In 1437 a Lorraine priest, portraying Christ, hung on a cross until near death. Another priest, cast as Judas in the same production, suffered heart failure during a realistic hanging scene.

By the 16th century, however, the wealthy began to withdraw support from the community plays and the decline of the Passion drama set in. At the close of the 18th century, religious strife spurred efforts to destroy the play's last strongholds in Bavaria and the Tyrol.

Oberammergau preserved the tradition, however, in spite of political pressures and wars. It retained its day-long play written in part before 1600. The simple, picturesque village still is largely uncommercialized. Its policy of selecting only the most worthy townspeople for the drama's chief characters has maintained the play's excellence. World War I de-

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development. Then the scheme collapsed as a result of London bank failures and rising panic in the United States, leaving only the boom-and-bust town of Middlesboro.

Today, after a slow general revival, the gap country of southeast Kentucky finds economic support in the coal industry, of which Middlesboro is center and chief city. The surrounding farm and hill folk (illustration, below) lead frugal but independent lives, making the most of a rugged terrain whose bounty grows less as the elevation increases.

NOTE: Cumberland Gap may be located on the Society's map of the Southeastern United States.

For additional information, see "Home Folk around Historic Cumberland Gap," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for December, 1943; and "Rambling Around the Roof of Eastern America," August, 1936.

See also, in the GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS, October 14, 1946, "Lost State Preceded 150-Year-Old Tennessee."

JOE CLARK FROM THREE LIONS

**SCHOOL-BOUND CHILDREN GET A BUMPY RIDE ALONG A ROCKY APPALACHIAN TRAIL**

**In the Cumberland Gap area many youngsters still walk to school, some of them trudging two miles morning and afternoon, rain or shine. But attendance is high, the hill children are happy, and their school work shows unusual brightness and eagerness to learn.**

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# Crocodile Hunting Stepped up in Uganda

PERHAPS one of the oddest industries in British sterling countries aimed at gaining precious dollars is capturing crocodiles in Uganda, reported W. Robert Moore upon his return to National Geographic Society headquarters from a survey of British East Africa.

The recently established Uganda Fish Marketing Corporation, Ltd., he said, hopes to give added stimulus to the crocodile-catching business already in operation in the country, so that Uganda may have a steady export of at least 1,000 skins a month for the luxury leather-goods trade, centered in the United States. Some of the skins are sent directly to America, others are exported first to the United Kingdom for processing into finished goods that will bring even greater dollar income.

## Industry Expands to Other East Africa Areas

At present, crocodile catching in Uganda is centered mainly about Lake Kyoga, a sprawling, reed-hemmed lake through which flows the Victoria Nile River only a short distance north of where it issues from mighty Lake Victoria. Buying posts are being established around Kyoga by the corporation, which will also act as the sole licensee to the African crocodile catchers.

As virtually all the streams and lakes of the protectorate are infested with "crocs," the corporation also looks toward expanding the industry to other areas. An excellent district for increased operation is the Semliki Valley at the south end of Lake Albert, another of the lakes that feed the Nile.

There are many methods of capturing crocodiles. Some are shot, others speared, but these methods often damage the skins. Night hunters, too, sometimes hunt crocs with torches or lanterns. One man holds the light in front of the croc while two others sneak up on the reptile and tackle him from the rear, a somewhat risky procedure.

An easier, safer way, and one that assures that the skins of the crocs —and the men—will be undamaged, is to snare them. Hunters set simple wire or rope snares in the "runs" crocs use when they come ashore. The snare is baited with putrid meat or fish, and the prying, hungry croc soon finds a noose about his neck.

## Ton of Fish a Day for Bait

Seeking to escape, he slithers back to the water. But there he meets disaster, for a heavy weight attached to the noose holds him beneath the surface and he drowns. A float tied to the weight conveniently marks the spot where he sinks and the Africans need only paddle out in their canoes and drag the carcass ashore. Only the skin on the belly is used. This is cut away and cured for export.

While Mr. Moore was in East Africa it was reported that crocodile hunters at Lake Baringo, in the Great Rift Valley of western Kenya, asked permission to catch a ton of fish a day to bait their traps for snaring 400 crocs a month. As that quantity would amount to the maximum of fish

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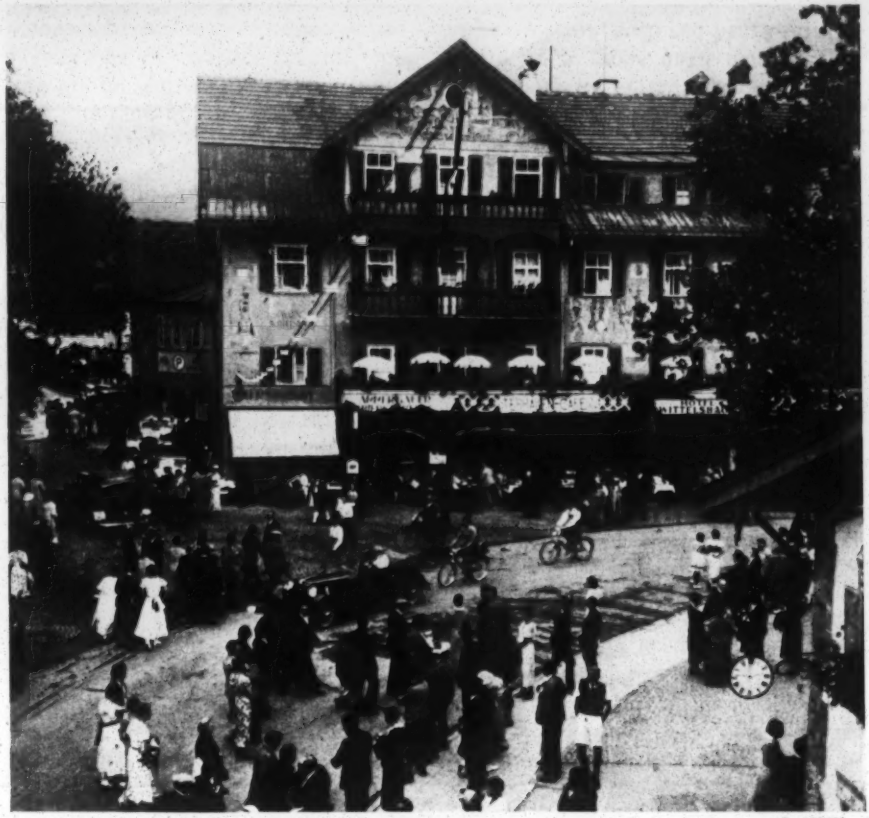
layed until 1922 the presentation scheduled for 1920. World War II prevented altogether any showing in 1940.

Many of Oberammergau's traditions are lodged in the Lunen Passion Play of Westphalia, Germany, which established an American home at Spearfish in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1938.

NOTE: Oberammergau may be located on the Society's map of Germany and Its Approaches.

For additional information on the Oberammergau presentation of the Passion play, see "Where Bible Characters Live Again," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for December, 1935.



E. OERTER

**IN 1934 OBERAMMERGAU CELEBRATED 300 YEARS OF PASSION PLAY PRESENTATION**

**To see the Tercentenary performance that year, 400,000 persons came from all over the world. Here, many of them stream into the main square in front of the hotel during the noon recess of the day-long play. The town's name means "upper Ammer County." The Ammer River flows through it.**

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# Fujiyama, "Sacred" Peak, Symbolizes Japan

THE mere suggestion that a cable-car line might someday scale Fujiyama (Fujisan), Japan's mountain-mecca, has raised a lively controversy between those who want to keep the "sacred" peak "as is" and those wishing to promote one of their country's biggest attractions. Fuji more nearly symbolizes the land in which it stands than does almost any other natural feature on earth.

To many armchair travelers the symmetrical peak, often compared to an inverted fan in shape, *is* Japan. Real travelers steaming into Tokyo Wan (bay) or Suruga Wan never forget the sight of the ghostly snow-crusted cone which seemingly hangs in the Honshu sky to the west (illustration, next page).

## Ten Rest Stations Provide Shelter

Persons who have never had an urge to climb a mountain immediately want to scale Fuji. Leisurely climbers require 36 to 48 hours for the 26-mile trip to the crater top and back. However, many do it in much faster time. Horses are used on the lower slopes, but the final sharp ascent must be negotiated by foot.

Japanese "strong-pull men" can be hired by well-to-do huffers and puffers to help them along. Ten rest stations at intervals on the trails provide shelter against the frequent storms and offer bunks for overnight.

To the Japanese, the mountain is holy. Both Shintoists and Buddhists revere it, and pilgrims form a steady stream up and down the trail during the short season. To them Fuji is the Supreme Altar of the Sun. Every native feels a duty to climb the mountain once. But sometimes a village selects a representative to make the climb and offer proxy prayers for his townspeople.

The first 1,200-foot rise of the 12,388-foot mountain, Japan's highest, is a cultivated, sloping plain of fertile volcanic soil. A belt reaching up to 4,000 feet supports bamboo grass and stunted trees. Extensive plant life, including pine and other forest trees, clings to the ever-steepening sides at the 6,000–8,000-foot level.

From there to the summit the mountain resembles the volcanic peak that it is—a crater that once spewed six inches of ashes over Tokyo. The entire "cone" is actually a depressing terrain of lava and volcanic debris. For ten months of the year this black waste is masked with transfiguring snow.

## Last Eruption in 1707-08

The unpleasing appearance of the crater at close view surprises many climbers who were enraptured with the beauty of the "eight lotus buds" of the summit as seen from a distance. These buds, "overhanging cusps of black lava," rise 100 feet above the rim of the 500-foot-deep crater.

Fuji's last eruption occurred in 1707-08. The volcano is considered dormant but not dead. The Japanese have never reconciled themselves to the 18th century outburst because it created a small crater on the south-

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that could be taken from the lake without depleting its stock, they were asked to find other methods for capturing crocs. Stunning was suggested as perhaps even better than using traps.

Farther south, the Department of Game, Fish, and Tsetse Control in Britain's Nyasaland Protectorate decided more than a year ago that Lake Nyasa's crocodiles were much too numerous. They not only were killing an occasional human, but were taking too much fish life from the great lake and actually destroying cattle standing in the shallows.

Mr. W. H. Jollyman was given the job of crocodile exterminator. His estimated kill in one year was 1,200 reptiles. Not caring about skins, he used rifle and poison.

"Woman Bites Crocodile" was the news recently in Southern Rhodesia when a wading native was seized in powerful saurian jaws. The woman, in desperation, bit back—so hard that the crocodile let go.

NOTE: Uganda is shown on the Society's map of Africa, which appeared as a supplement to the *National Geographic Magazine* for March, 1950.

For additional information, see "Britain Tackles the East African Bush" and "Roaming Africa's Unfenced Zoos," two illustrated articles by W. Robert Moore in the *National Geographic Magazine* for March, 1950; "Wings Over Nature's Zoo in Africa" (20 illustrations in duotone), October, 1939; "Trans-Africa Safari," September, 1938*; and "Uganda, 'Land of Something New,'" January, 1937*.

© EAST AFRICAN RAILWAYS AND HARBOURS

**THE HIDEOUS GRIN OF THE CROCODILE GREETS TRAVELERS IN MANY PARTS OF AFRICA**

**This one takes his ease in the shallows of the Victoria Nile between Murchison Falls and Lake Albert. W. Robert Moore, of the National Geographic Magazine's Foreign Editorial Staff, recently returned from British East Africa where he photographed lions, elephants, leopards, rhinos, zebras, giraffes, and many other wild animals in their natural state.**

east slope which mars the peak's perfection. Native painters never show this nonconformity.

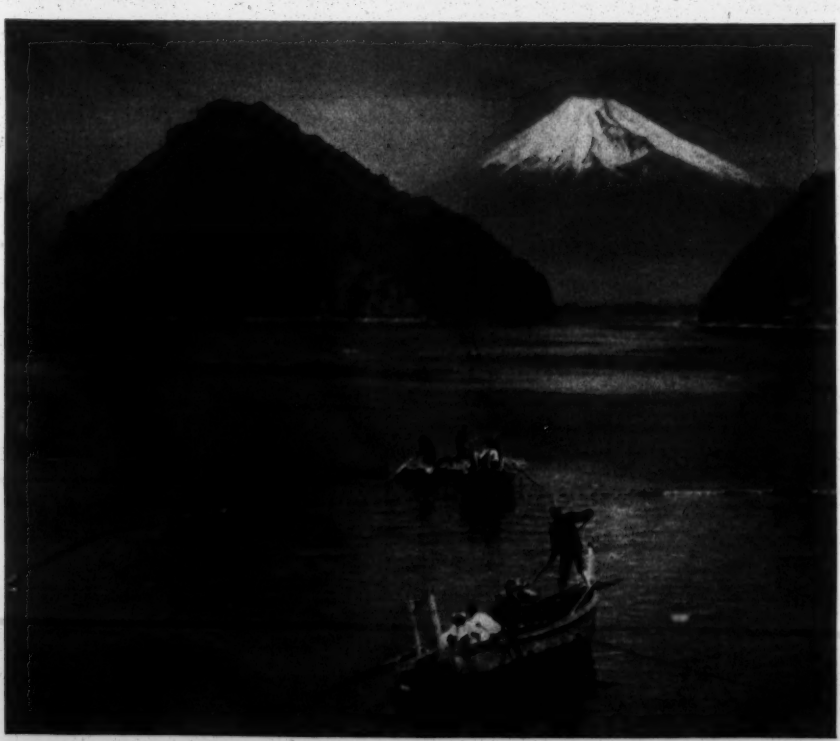
The same traditionalism, or desire to keep things as they always were, accounts for much of the Japanese feeling against building a cable-car line up Fuji. Proponents of the line say that under American occupation many traditions are being thrown overboard so why not capitalize on the mountain's world-wide appeal. With a touch of bitterness, a prefecture governor said that Fuji is not so sacred since during the war it helped B-29 pilots plot their courses to Tokyo. Having contributed to national disaster, it now should aid recovery, he concluded.

Many American soldiers have climbed Fuji since the end of the war. The village of Yoshida, near the base, makes a nice business selling them walking sticks. At each rest station, for a fee, natives stamp the sticks with the hour of arrival. One G.I. group scaled the mountain and returned in 15 hours.

NOTE: Fujiyama may be located on the Society's map of Japan and Korea.

For additional information on Japan, see "Backwoods Japan During American Occupation," in the *National Geographic Magazine* for April, 1947; "Sunset in the East," June, 1946*; "Face of Japan," December, 1945; "Behind the Mask of Modern Japan," November, 1945*; "Japan and the Pacific," April, 1944; "Unknown Japan," August, 1942*; and "Women's Work in Japan," January, 1938*.

See also, in the GEOGRAPHIC SCHOOL BULLETINS, April 26, 1948, "East Meets West on Tokyo's Avenue A"; and "Yokosuka, Naval Base Port, Turns to Trade," October 27, 1947.



GERMAINE KELLERMAN

**SO WELL KNOWN ARE FUJI'S SNOW-CLAD CONTOURS THAT ITS PICTURE HARDLY NEEDS A LABEL**